

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 - 20. (Canceled).

21. (New) A method of manufacturing a vehicular frame assembly comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing an insert having a node securing portion and a mounting portion;
 - (b) casting a node about the node securing portion of the insert;
 - (c) securing a first structural member to the mounting portion of the insert;
- and
- (d) securing a plurality of second structural members to the node and to the first structural member to form a vehicular frame assembly.

22. (New) The method defined in Claim 21 wherein step (a) is performed by providing the insert from a first material, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting the node from a second material that is different from the first material.

23. (New) The method defined in Claim 21 wherein step (a) is performed by providing the insert with a node securing portion having an aperture formed therethrough, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting a portion of the node within the aperture.

24. (New) The method defined in Claim 21 wherein step (a) is performed by providing the insert with a node securing portion having a plurality of apertures formed therethrough, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting a portion of the node within each of the plurality of apertures.

25. (New) The method defined in Claim 21 wherein step (a) is performed by providing the insert with a node securing portion having a protrusion formed therein,

and wherein step (b) is performed by casting a portion of the node about the protrusion.

26. (New) The method defined in Claim 21 wherein step (a) is performed by providing the insert with a node securing portion having a plurality of protrusions formed therein, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting a portion of the node about of the plurality of protrusions.

27. (New) The method defined in Claim 21 wherein step (c) is performed by initially moving the first structural member both in a lateral direction and in a rotational direction relative to the insert until a desired relative orientation is achieved, then securing the first structural member to the mounting portion of the insert.

28. (New) The method defined in Claim 21 wherein step (b) is performed prior to step (c).

29. (New) The method defined in Claim 21 wherein step (c) is performed prior to step (b).

30. (New) The method defined in Claim 29 wherein the first structural member is hollow and has an open end, and wherein the insert closes the open end of the first structural member.

31. (New) A method of manufacturing a vehicular frame assembly comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a plurality of inserts, each insert having a node securing portion and a mounting portion;

(b) casting a node about the node securing portions of each of the plurality of inserts;

(c) securing a first structural member to the mounting portion of each of the plurality of inserts; and

(d) securing a plurality of second structural members to the plurality of first structural members to form a vehicular frame assembly.

32. (New) The method defined in Claim 31 wherein step (a) is performed by providing each of the inserts from a first material, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting the node from a second material that is different from the first material.

33. (New) The method defined in Claim 31 wherein step (a) is performed by providing each of the inserts with a node securing portion having an aperture formed therethrough, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting a portion of the node within each of the apertures.

34. (New) The method defined in Claim 31 wherein step (a) is performed by providing each of the inserts with a node securing portion having a plurality of apertures formed therethrough, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting a portion of the node within each of the plurality of apertures.

35. (New) The method defined in Claim 31 wherein step (a) is performed by providing each of the inserts with a node securing portion having a protrusion formed therein, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting a portion of the node about each of the protrusions.

36. (New) The method defined in Claim 31 wherein step (a) is performed by providing each of the inserts with a node securing portion having a plurality of protrusions formed therein, and wherein step (b) is performed by casting a portion of the node about of the plurality of protrusions.

37. (New) The method defined in Claim 31 wherein step (c) is performed by initially moving each of the first structural members both in a lateral direction and in a rotational direction relative to the inserts until a desired relative orientation is achieved, then securing the first structural members to the mounting portion of the inserts.

38. (New) The method defined in Claim 31 wherein step (b) is performed prior to step (c).

39. (New) The method defined in Claim 31 wherein step (c) is performed prior to step (b).

40. (New) The method defined in Claim 39 wherein each of the first structural members is hollow and has an open end, and wherein the inserts each close the open ends of the first structural members.